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PROPOSED SCHOOLS REFORMS.

Two contributors to the Atlantic Monthly

for August of which brief mention has already

been made, deserve more extended notice.

Both are on educational topics. One is

a plea by Horace E. Scudder for a better

class of reading books in the public schools.

The compilers of the books now in use, he

says very truly, come to disregard high

literary standards, and have made the selections

solely with a view to their merits as knowl-

edge. These purposes are commendable in

their way, but the writer argues that it is un-

necessary to confine a child to commonplace

merely to teach facts perhaps non-essential,

and that it is wrong to keep him in ignorance

of the best literature until he takes it up as a

study in the advanced grades. "When the

children of a nation," he says, "are taken at

the age of five or six and kept eight or ten

years at school, and this schooling becomes

the great feature of their life, dominating

their activity and determining the character

of their thought, it is natural that books

and reading should be largely ac-

cessory, and that the quality of the

audience should be largely affected

by the kind of speech which is addressed to it.

If, according to the common practice in our

schools, the child were reading over and over,

and over again, the great literature which

he would never read, in place of the little liter-

ature which he will never remember, how im-

measurable would be the difference in the

furnishing of his mind." Mr. Scudder urges

the appropriation of the works of the greatest

American authors for this purpose—not in the

fragmentary form in which text books are

now made, but in a shape complete enough to

familiarize the youth with the "classics" of

their own country. He is convinced that a

familiarity with Hawthorne, Irving, Cooper,

Bryant, Holmes, Emerson, Longfellow and

Whittier will not breed a narrow American-

ism, but will be a sure way to bring about an

acquaintance with the best English literature.

The other article, by President Eliot, of

Harvard College, discusses the possibility of

shortening, and at the same time enriching

school courses. The writer has been made to

see the necessity of this through observing the

increasing demands of professional education

and the fact that the college graduate is

compelled to spend from two to four years in

additional study to fit himself for one of the

learned professions, and can hardly begin to

support himself before he is twenty-seven

years old. This condition is so unreasonable,

especially in this new country, that, as the

writer says, a remedy is urgently demanded.

The trouble, he thinks, does not lie in the

college course not altogether in the preparatory

schools, but rather in the primary grades.

The age of admission to college should be re-

duced, not by lowering the educational re-

quirements, but by fitting the youth to enter

at an earlier age. The writer then makes

some suggestions as to how this may be done,

and as a practical illustration points to the

French schools. With all the vaunted super-

iority of American public schools it will sur-

prise the average reader to be told that the

French boy has the opportunity to make a

much greater attainment by the time he is

eighteen than the American boy can make in

the best schools of this country by the time

he is nineteen. This difference does not come

from a forcing process in France, but from

an improved programme. The French boy is

introduced early to interesting yet serious

subjects. He begins the study of history, for

instance, at eight years of age, and being in

the form of biography it is attractive to him.

He devotes just one-third the time to arith-

metics that the American gives, and yet for

practical purposes is quite as skillful with

numbers as the Americans. He gets at

natural history early and languages

early, and a study of his native lit-

erature is made preponderant from the

beginning. That a similar arrangement

of programmes can be accomplished at once

in the schools of this country President

Eliot does not believe; but he points out some

steps which will lead gradually to the im-

provement desired. One of these consists in

raising the quality of instruction by securing

better teachers; another in revising the school

course little by little, and whenever it may

seem to need it most. While treating of this

point he says of the complaint of over-pres-

sure that it is probably not work which

causes over-fatigue so much as lack of inter-

est and lack of conscious progress. He recom-

mends the diminution of the number of

examinations, and the sitting at an

easy pace which is not profitable when re-

cured. What he says on this head might

well be read with advantage by every teacher

in the land, but particularly by those edu-

cators who measure educational progress by the

percentage of questions answered on review

examinations.

Because American schools are good and

have done a great work, it does not follow

that they cannot be better. When educators

of such broad views and wide experience as

those quoted point out defects in the system,

it behooves those to give heed who have it in

their power to apply a remedy.

CAMPAIGN SONGS.

Campaign enthusiasm manifests itself in a

variety of ways. Some men give utterance

to their overflowing emotions in cheers, and

shouts, and other vocal demonstrations. If

they live in Indianapolis, horns serve to con-

vey their joy to the knowledge of the world.

Some men find satisfaction in street parades,

some in the wearing of badges typical of

their sentiments, some in vociferous "argu-

ment," some in grotesque antics. To others,

and these not a few, all such methods of ex-

pression are inadequate. Only through verse

and rhyme can they properly rejoice. Men

who never wrote a couplet in their lives will,

with politics for inspiration, drop into poetry

with far greater ease than Mr. Wegg. To be

sure, it is campaign poetry; but why speak

lightly of this for reason? Poetry is de-

fined as the language of deep feeling and ex-

alted sentiments, and may not a man feel

deeply and his thoughts soar to lofty heights

in contemplation of his country or of the po-

litical party which represents to him the

principles that make his country great? It is

true that the verses when written do not in-

variably fill the reader with the same en-

thusiasm that animated the author, but this

is apt to be the case with any poetry. Even

love poems not infrequently excite

excite hilarity rather than a responsive

sympathy, but this affords no reason for the

abandonment of the delightful and inviting

theme. If patriotic enthusiasm burns to ex-

press itself in verse, it should not be hindered.

Apparently it is not hindered, if the quantities

with which the Journal is favored may serve

as an indication. But few of these effusions,

as the readers know, find their way into type;

innumerable efforts not less meritorious are

"unavailable for lack of space."

The most remarkable feature of this liter-

ary outburst is that it is not confined to a

limited region, but is spread over a large por-

tion of the United States. Not a city dally of

one political party but prints more or less

original campaign verse; not a weekly, from

the most remote cross-roads, but contains

similar contributions. If the unused offerings

everywhere bear the same proportion to those

printed as in this locality, the total quantity

produced is simply enormous and beyond

computation. It is to be noticed, too, that

this profusion—would it be too much to call

it an epidemic of verse—is not common to all

campaigns. No popular presidential candi-

date ever came before the people who did not

serve some rhymesters as a congenial subject

for their pens; but it is the popular candi-

date who represents a great principle who is the

inspiration for the many. Campaign after cam-

paign may go by, and with all the other man-

ifestations of interest and enthusiasm, lack

the "catching" rhymes, and, above all, the

stirring songs that prove so effective when

they are produced. The spontaneity of

rhyme this year, among the members of one

party, is surely significant of a feeling that

presages victory. The public life and the

private character of the one candidate satisfy

the highest requirements; the issues which

he represents appeal to the personal interests

and the patriotism of all citizens who look

at them fairly and squarely. All these elements

combine to create a fervid enthusiasm which

can only find expression in poems of rejoic-

ing. The songs may not meet an exacting

poetical standard, but as opposed to dull

eloquence or the spiritless borrowed music of

the opposition, they are to be regarded with

great favor. The campaign verse-writer is a

great institution in this Harrison year, and bids

fair to enact a part as important as did the song-

sters of 1840.

CHICAGO'S LATEST ACQUISITION.

The best society of Chicago has received an

important addition in the arrival of a lady

whose ancestry dates further back than that

of the oldest families. In fact, to use the

language of stock-brokers, her certified pedi-

gree reaches far beyond the Christian era.

The lady is an Egyptian mummy. Her com-

ing to this country is a case of assisted im-

migration. She is one of a pair of mummies

presented by the Khedive of Egypt to the

Hon. S. S. Cox, late minister to Turkey.

Now while a mummy is an interesting thing

to read or write about it is an embarrassing

subject of poetical allusion and it is only the "swan-

song" that can secure admission the contributors

are likely to lose heart.

In the work entitled "Battles and Leaders of

the Civil War," issued by the Century Company,

some observations by Mr. George O. Seligman

on the historical basis of Whittier's "Barbara

Fritchie" are calculated to cast a damper on

the admirers of the poem, for he asserts that

the alleged heroine, though doubtless a very

patriotic and venerable old lady, never waved

a flag out of the window at Jackson's men, or

the subject of any order from Stonewall him-

self. What she really did was to wave a

flag from the porch of her house

when Burnside's men were marching

toward Frederick. It may, however, be some

comfort to the disillusioned to know that Mr.

Whittier himself, writing in 1880, and with all

the distinctive evidence presumably before him,

said of the story on which he founded his poem:

"I had no reason to doubt its accuracy then,

and I am still constrained to believe that it is

founded in fact. If I thought otherwise I

should not hesitate to retract it." It is possible

that Mr. Whittier's information in regard to the

incident may be quite as good as Mr. Seligman's,

whose name, by the way, is no particular

guaranty of historic accuracy.

The trousers of American bishops forms a

topic for the sage discussion of London papers.

These gentlemen, a number of whom are now

in England, do not conform to the custom of English

bishops and appear in knee-breeches and silk

stockings at dinners and other festive occasions,

but clothe their limbs in the very respectable

pantaloons that they wear at home and which

differ in no noticeable way from those worn by

gentlemen who are not prelates. The question

raised in the discussion is whether the influence

of the London bishops on the visiting brethren

will be sufficiently great to lead them to adopt

and have located her in the twenty-second

dynasty. This is calculated to give her a

good introduction in society. A learned pro-

fessor who presided at her reception and

unrolling, and who, though not a mummy

himself, has made a study of the subject,

says:

"I am not enough of an authority in Egypt-

ology to decipher at once the hieroglyphic in-

scriptions on the coffin, but I am reasonably

certain that Tothmea was a priestess, though

of low rank. The larger marks on the coffin

indicate that she was dedicated to the service

of Isis, the Egyptian Venus. At the feet are

the figures of two jackals, who were supposed

to guard the dead. The central inscription

gives her station in life, but not her name, an

omission to Isis and a quotation from the

ancient Egyptian ritual for the dead. This

coffination is found on nearly all, if not all,

coffins, and with the phrase "To the West"

and "Ani" (soul) and "Ka" (vitality) added

ad a line or two suggesting the ap-

pearance of the soul before the Almighty

to be weighed in the balance for the deter-

mination of a future state. I shall de-

cipher the inscription as soon as possible and

send it to the museum. One of the signs by

which we place Tothmea in the twenty-second